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AIDAC, MANILA FOR CONTROLLER, GENEVA FOR KYLOH

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SUBJECT: FIJI FLOOD REQUIRING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

REF: SUVA 00016

¶1. Embassy reported reftel that conditions affecting thousands of Fijians have worsened.

¶2. Since January, above average rainfall and tidal surges have caused floods on Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, particularly affecting the towns of Ba, Nadi, Sigatoka, and Rakiraki in the western region. On January 11, the Government of Fiji (GOF) declared a state of emergency, deployed assessment teams to affected areas, and provided evacuation assistance for stranded individuals. By January 15, the worst flooding in memory had killed 11 people and displaced several thousands. Currently nearly 8,500 residents (down from nearly 10,000 two days ago) are housed in 110 shelters, according to figures provided by Fiji's National Disaster Management Office. Water levels of more than 10 feet have closed all major roads and airports. Initial GOF assessments indicated significant damage to infrastructure, agricultural production, and water supplies. The GOF Meteorological Service has forecast continued rain but from a downgraded tropical depression in the coming week.

¶3. On January 14, Ambassador McGann issued a disaster declaration. In response, USAID/OFDA is providing \$50,000 through the U.S. Embassy to the Fiji Red Cross Society for the distribution of relief commodities and implementation of emergency activities.

¶4. Embassy is determining whether a more robust USG response is required to mitigate the imminent needs arising from this disaster. The projected relative break in the weather should allow Embassy to develop a response commensurate with the scope and scale of the disaster. Emergency food rations are reportedly the most urgent need and likely to remain so in the recovery phase. Embassy DAO has asked PACOM to begin preliminary planning for a possible airlift relief effort.

¶5. Embassy will meet with interim government officials, key donor countries, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations on January 16. We will advise soonest on the most appropriate USG response.

McGann